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# Who lost Iran?

The nominees are . . .

by Stu Cohen

Nobody knows for certain who first asked the insidious question that dominated the early '50s, "Who lost China?" It probably first appeared in *Time*, but *Time* researchers believe the magazine was simply quoting a political figure of the day, possibly the junior senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy.

It may even have begun earlier. In 1946, after General George C. Marshall arranged a cease-fire between Mao and Chiang, General Patrick Hurley resigned from his post as ambassador to China and charged that "subversive elements" within the State Department were plotting a communist victory thousands of miles around the globe. He was clearly a man with a way with words. Then there was Sen. William Knowland of California, known to his opponents as "the senator from Formosa." Or perhaps it was one of the Alsops, simply quoting the prevailing sentiment in the capital.

Nor is it clear who first posed the question for 1979, "Who lost Iran?" What is apparent is that this question is being asked, and that many of the primary candidates for the honor are running for cover and protecting their flanks.

Among those in front of the field are Shah Reza Pahlavi, former "shah of shahs" and now a political exile whose country is seeking his extradition; President Jimmy Carter, whose term in office has witnessed a general foreign policy debacle; Henry Kissinger, the American connection for Iran's vast increases in arms purchases from the US and its becoming the US's peacekeeper in the Persian Gulf; and last, but not by any means least, Stansfield Turner and the Central Intellig

The debate within the administration reached the public when a Carter memorandum critical of US intelligence efforts in Iran surfaced several months ago. But now it has become a national issue, with all sides adding their two-to-five cents' worth.

At his press conference last Wednesday, Jimmy Carter was asked the question directly and replied: "Well, it's obvious that Iran was not ours to lose in the first place. We don't own Iran and we have never had any intentions nor ability to control the internal affairs of Iran. . . . To try to lay blame on someone in the United States for a new government having been established in Iran I think is just a waste of time and avoids the basic issue that this was a decision to be made, and which was made, by the Iranian people themselves."

Which is, of course, a fine answer that both blames the shah, indirectly, and absolves the administration. Carter might as well have asked that no oxen be gored.

Obviously, the overthrow of the shah and the coming to power of Khomeini was accomplished by the people of Iran. But the US has inextricably bound itself to "the internal affairs of Iran" since 1953, when Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, CIA chief Allan, overthrew the nationalist regime of Dr. Mohammed Mossadeq and brought Shah Reza Pahlavi back from exile. Thus, it mocks history and logic to beg the question in this manner. The shah certainly lost Iran, but he did so with American encouragement and backing. Jimmy Carter is the president left holding this uncomfortably large bag. Especially as the American right sees it.

"I believe there were several factors at work," Conservative Caucus leader Howard Phillips told the *Phoenix*. "First of all, the Carter administration in requiring the shah to free certain political prisoners and to expand, perhaps prematurely, the opportunity for large public demonstrations contributed to the situation." General John Singlaub, former commander of US forces in Korea and now a prime mover in the American Security Council, agreed: "I don't think there's any question but that you have to hold this administration at least partly responsible. . . . The at-

titude that was displayed right after this administration came into power was sort of an anti-shah attitude, and I think that probably contributed. I think the pressures that the administration placed on the shah in the human rights area undoubtedly gave great encouragement to the Marxists as well as the radical Muslims that were leading this."

But a Senate staffer privy to the information generated by the Foreign Relations Committee and its chairman, Frank Church, sees less blame for Carter. "I think primarily, as Senator Church sees it, President Carter did not lose Iran. This is not the modern manifestation of China in 1949. I think as far as the senator sees it, and I agree with him, the shah lost Iran."

He continued, though, "We may have participated in all of this and even encouraged his sense that security, both internal and external, flowed from the horn of military plenty, and I think, to that extent, we have (some) responsibility. But the man and his advisers were incapable of controlling and maintaining his 'white revolution.' He wasn't a capable manager of controlled fusion, as the scientists would say, and he just simply didn't manage, and the shah lost Iran, the United States didn't lose it." Our count, then, is two votes for the shah, two for Jimmy Carter.

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